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SUBJECT: INDONESIA EARTHQUAKE HUMANITARIAN UPDATE #11: SNAPSHOT OF
EMERGENCY SHELTER NEEDS

REF: JAKARTA 01715

Summary

¶1. The USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART) is continually assessing the dynamic emergency shelter conditions of areas affected by the September 30 earthquake, which severely damaged nearly 140,000 houses. Little displacement has occurred, as most families are living under tarps in close proximity to houses. The most costly shelters, constructed of brick and tile roofs, sustained more damage than less expensive shelters, constructed of bamboo mats and thatch. Families are salvaging materials and have commenced rebuilding houses. The humanitarian community is concerned about reports that the Government of Indonesia (GoI) will provide limited compensation to families whose houses were damaged or destroyed. USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) is providing temporary and transitional shelter assistance, programs to provide the basis for a "build back better" disaster risk reduction approach, and technical expertise. End summary.

USAID/DART Assessment of Shelter Needs

¶2. Since arriving in West Sumatra Province following the September 30 earthquake, the USAID/DART field officer has assessed conditions in 13 villages in Agam, Pariaman, and Padang Pariaman districts. The shelter situation is rapidly changing, as some families continue to live under tents while others have already begun rebuilding houses. This assessment report serves as a snapshot of the shelter situation at this point in time. One week from now, given the rapidly changing nature of the shelter situation, this information could be obsolete.

-- Damage and Displacement --

¶3. According to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the earthquake severely damaged nearly

140,000 houses in the three aforementioned districts. With only minor exceptions, including the displaced persons camp per reftel, families whose houses have sustained damage are remaining at points of origin. The humanitarian community has received very few reports of displacement away from the respective family's plot of land.

¶4. Almost all families in assessed areas are living under tarps in very close proximity to their houses. Even where damage to houses is relatively minimal, families are choosing to continue living under tents outside. Many families have expressed the belief that a larger earthquake is coming and fear entering their houses.

¶5. Shelters in affected areas are of three distinct types, corresponding to the families' relative degree of wealth. Wealthy families inhabit brick homes with clay tile roofs. Less expensive are brick homes with corrugated galvanized iron roofs. Poorer families live in bamboo weave mat homes with thatched roofs. The USAID/DART field officer observed that houses with the clay tile roofs were generally the ones most damaged by the earthquake. This phenomenon could be due to the weight of the tile roof combined with poor construction techniques that left the roof without sufficient support during the quake.

-- Rebuilding Planned and Progressing --

¶6. The majority of families who lived in houses with clay tile roofs reported plans to rebuild with wood construction. Some families stated they would do this because wood construction is "stronger" than brick construction, while other families plan to do this because wood is less expensive than brick.

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¶7. Throughout the earthquake-affected area, the USAID/DART field officer observed families salvaging materials from the debris. When asked what they intended to do with the material, families reported plans to use the materials to begin rebuilding houses after saving a sufficient amount of money.

¶8. Some families in areas assessed were already engaged in reconstruction. One man reported that he did not want his family to sleep under a tent during the upcoming rainy season. He expected to rebuild his house within the next two or three weeks. The USAID/DART field officer observed the man rebuilding a structurally unsound house. (Comment: The story of this man highlights a trend underway throughout the earthquake-affected area, as many families have already started rebuilding houses. To positively influence the current rebuilding phase, any earthquake-resistant construction training must commence very soon. End comment.)

¶9. Health issues may arise if families continue to live under tents during the rainy season. Health providers are concerned about a possible increase in the number of pneumonia and upper respiratory infections if families continue to live in settings open to the elements during the rainy season.

-- GoI Support for Shelter Reconstruction Program --

¶10. Unsubstantiated reports are circulating that the GoI plans to support a shelter reconstruction program. This program would provide approximately \$530, \$1,060, and \$1,590 for families whose houses were slightly, moderately, and severely damaged, respectively. Families report that an "average" house -- one with brick walls and corrugated galvanized iron sheet roofing -- costs roughly \$8,480 to build. The significant shortfall between the GoI shelter compensation plan and the reported cost of building a house gives rise to concern that people may use cheaper building materials and employ less expensive building techniques when rebuilding houses.

¶11. The earthquake severely damaged cement factories and brick kilns. The brick-making industry is operating at 40 percent of its pre-earthquake capacity. With cement and bricks in short supply, the humanitarian community is concerned that people might use materials of lower quality in shelter reconstruction.

-- USAID/OFDA Interventions --

¶12. In Indonesia, shelter construction is an ongoing process even outside of a disaster setting. Families that generate wealth often invest money in their house. USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) is currently supporting the provision of temporary and transitional shelter as part of the humanitarian response to the earthquake. Equally important, USAID/OFDA is supporting education programs that focus on improved building techniques with a strategic emphasis on seismic resistance. These programs are designed to provide the basis for a "build back better" approach that is part of a broader disaster risk reduction program within the earthquake-affected area. In addition, a shelter and settlements expert recently joined the USAID/DART in Padang and is working with the GoI and humanitarian community to meet emergency shelter needs.

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